



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 15:1-12

“The First Apostle's Creed”

TRANSCRIPT

[Audio begins] And will you listen as I read the first 12 verses of this 15th chapter of Acts as our Scripture reading. This is the account of the Jerusalem conference. We familiarly call this incident the council at Jerusalem. And Luke who has authored this book writes,

"And certain men who came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. (You'll remember that to come down meant to come down to Antioch and the church that was in that place.) When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come up to Jerusalem, they were received by the church, and the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together to

consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know that how a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, who knoweth the hearts, bore them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. (There's a great deal of stress, by the way, in the original text on that expression "by faith," by faith purifying their hearts.) Now therefore why put God to the test (You have "why tempt ye God"), to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. Then all the multitude kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them."

May God bless this reading from his word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege and opportunity of listening to the holy Scriptures. And we pray that the exposition may be in the power of the Holy Spirit and that we may be in tune to his ministry as he illuminates the word of God and brings the truth to us. We pray, Oh God, that our hearts may be quieted and that we may be responsive to him who desires to teach us the things of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray, Lord, that the significance of the ministry of our Lord Jesus may come home to us. And if there are any here who have not yet put their trust in him, give them no rest nor peace until they do. We thank Thee for this day in which we live and for the opportunity to set forth the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. And enable us, Oh God, to do it in a way that will honor him and will please Thee.

Deliver us from all of the things that prevent us and impede us from the ministry of the truth of God. We especially pray, Lord, for our country and for its leadership, and

today we would remember the astronauts and pray Thy blessing upon them. Wilt Thou protect and keep them in accordance with Thy will and return them safely to the earth? And we pray, Oh God, that Thou wilt guide the president in the decisions that face him. And we pray for this land. May, Oh God, there be the freedom to proclaim the gospel until Jesus Christ comes again and the purposes of the ages are accomplished. We thank Thee for those who are with us here, but we pray, Lord, for those who are unable to be with us. We remember some who are in the hospital, and we pray Thy hand of blessing upon them. And may at this very moment, they sense the blessing of the Lord which maketh rich. And now we commit this meeting to Thee, and we pray that all of the cares and troubles of life and all of the trials of life and all of the deep burdens of life may be adjusted to the holy Scriptures. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for this morning in our message is "The First Apostle's Creed." When we think of the term "the council of Jerusalem," our thoughts immediately go back to the passage in Acts chapter 15 that we have read this morning for our Scripture reading. Like many other popular biblical expressions, the expression "the council at Jerusalem" is somewhat misleading. For example, when we think of the Apostle's Creed, it probably does not occur to most of us until we specifically say something about it or study it that so far as we can tell, the apostles never recited the Apostle's Creed. It is a creed that grew up in the second century A.D. So to call it the Apostle's Creed is somewhat misleading. If we mean that it is probably in harmony with what the apostles taught, that is one thing. But if we mean that the apostles were the authors of it, that is another thing.

We often speak of the great commission. And when we think of the great commission, we think of the words that Jesus spoke to the apostles in the 28th chapter of Gospel of Matthew when he gave them the great commission to go to the uttermost corners of the earth and teach the word. As a matter of fact, the greatest commission of

all was undoubtedly the commission that the Father gave the Son recorded in Galatians chapter 4. So to speak of the great commission is probably somewhat misleading.

To speak of the Lord's Prayer is also somewhat misleading. If we mean by that a prayer that Jesus gave as a model prayer, that is one thing. If we mean by that that Jesus prayed that prayer, or that even the apostles prayed that prayer, that's another thing. As a matter of fact, the most outstanding prayer that our Lord uttered was the prayer of John chapter 17, the great high priestly prayer. That should really be called "the Lord's prayer."

So there are many biblical expressions that we frequently use which can be quite misleading. The council at Jerusalem is often thought of as a denominational meeting, a meeting of headquarters of all of the churches, very much like the General Assembly in the Presbyterian church. Or the Baptist meeting, the convention, in the Baptist church. But I submit to you that this is not really true of the council at Jerusalem. It was not a convention of delegates. It was a meeting of two churches, Antioch and Jerusalem.

Paul and Barnabas were there for a consultation primarily, not for the pronouncement of an authoritative decree, although a decree did come from their council, which they passed around among the churches, in which in general the churches recognized because in those days there was a fellowship of common belief and common practice and not an organizational unity. So far as I can tell, there is no organizational unity of any local church with another local church in the New Testament.

Furthermore, as you read Acts chapter 15, you will discover that the authority was the authority of the apostles and elders and not the authority of the church. So when we speak of the council at Jerusalem, we must remember that it is not really quite the kind of council that we are accustomed to regard it in our church language.

This consultation involved the principle of grace in human salvation. And therefore, there was strife. As a matter of fact, every time the principle of grace comes up in salvation, there is strife, except among Christians who understand that principle. You see, grace is an offense to human pride and to human self-righteousness. To be told that

God saves men on the basis of grace, and not on the basis of what we are or what we do, is an offense to our inborn idea that we can satisfy God by our own actions.

Paul said, "And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? then is the offence of the cross ceased." If I preach a works salvation, no one will regard me as offensive. But if I preach a salvation by grace, which nullifies all of your ideas that you can approach God on the basis of human merit, that is an offense to self-righteous men.

If I were to sum it up, I would say something like this, that the cross is an offense to human morality because it says works cannot justify. Character may get you to hell, it can never take you to heaven. The cross is an offense to philosophy, for its appeal is an appeal to faith. The cross is an offense to culture. Its truths are revealed to the simple and sometimes the ignoble. Paul said to the church at Corinth, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise, not many noble, not many well-born are called." The cross is an offense to our culture.

It is an offense to the sense of caste. God chooses the poor and the humble. It is an offense to our will because it calls for unconditional surrender. It is an offense to our pride for it reveals the exceeding sinfulness of the human heart. One look at the cross of Jesus Christ is sufficient to give us an understanding of human sin. And the cross is an offense to the man himself because it says you are dead and you must be born again.

So when we talk about grace in connection with the plan of salvation, immediately men are offended. If you are offended in this audience, it is because you have responded out of human self-righteousness. And I hope and pray, if you have responded negatively, that you will realize that in this very negative response, the Bible has spoken truthfully of you. And that it has spoken truthfully of you in order that to you might be revealed the significance of the ministry of Jesus Christ, for it is by the cross that men are delivered.

Acts chapter 15 follows by several chapters an experience that Peter had in Cornelius' house. Being a Jewish man and being a genuine Christian, but still encrusted

with some of the feelings that the Jewish people had because of special privileges granted to them in grace by God under the old covenant, Peter found it very difficult to believe that Gentiles could be saved. And so God had to speak to Peter. He gave him a vision, called him to Cornelius' house, and in the house of Cornelius, he introduced his message and in the course of his introduction said, "By him give all the prophets witness that through his name, Jesus' name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

And when he said those words, the Holy Spirit fell upon that gathering and they began to speak in tongues. And then the apostle stated, "Who can forbid water to these that they be baptized for they have received the Holy Spirit as we have received the Holy Spirit." And Peter learned that Gentiles could be saved, that God had granted to them, the Gentiles, repentance unto life. And he had granted it to them, given it to them.

Now, that was a tremendously astonishing experience that Peter had, and Luke records it in order that we might, if we have any question about this, realize that men are not saved through the adherence to some religious rite, even if it were given by God, but men are saved on the basis of grace through faith.

Now I say, you would have thought that Peter had learned his lesson and that the church had learned its lesson. And I think, really, that they had learned the lesson. Why then the trouble in Jerusalem and Antioch several chapters later in the book? I think the answer to that is simply this, they were convinced that Gentiles could be saved, but they were not yet clear about the method or how they were saved. And so some discussions arose in the church at Antioch and Jerusalem which led to the first Apostle's Creed. And mind you, that is what I'm saying; the Bible does not call it that. I'm just saying it was a creed that the apostles subscribed to. And so far as I can tell, it is as good as any in all of the Book of Acts.

Now let's go back to the historical situation, and we're going back to Antioch in Syria, a church which had at least five men as teachers and prophets. The idea of one

man as the pastor of a church is unknown in the New Testament. I challenge anyone to find it in the Bible. It cannot be found. Five men were in Antioch, teachers and prophets, among them Paul and Barnabas.

Now earlier, some men had come down from James. And Peter, who had been meeting with the Christians at Antioch, though a Jew, began to separate himself from them. This incident is recorded in Galatians chapter 2. And in the midst of this experience, the Apostle Paul stood up in the meeting of the church, or in those days, they had meetings in which any male man could participate. And Paul stood up in that gathering, I resist the temptation to say anything there, Paul stood up in that gathering, and as he expresses it in Galatians chapter 2, he stood up before them all because Peter, when men had come down from Judea, had begun to separate himself from the Gentiles and no longer to fellowship with them. Apparently, I do not know why Peter did this, perhaps the men who came down from the mother church in Jerusalem were impressive looking men. Perhaps Peter thought I will not be invited to next Easter's apostle's Bible conference in Jerusalem. But at any rate, "he withdrew fearing those who were of the circumcision," Paul says.

Now Paul stood up in that meeting and he said, Look here, Peter. And mind you, he's speaking to the chief of the apostles. He said, Look here, Peter, you are a Jewish man, and you've been meeting with the Gentiles. Now you're withdrawing yourself from the Gentiles and meeting only with the Jews. Are you, a Jew, who has been meeting with the Gentiles, are you now going to teach the Gentiles that they ought to live like the Jews? Peter, don't you know that a man is justified by faith in Jesus Christ and not by the works of the law? And these men who teach that circumcision is necessary for salvation and appeal to a prescription of the law, don't you see that that contradicts the statements of the word of God? And I think Peter was convinced. Acts chapter 15, which takes place a little later, is a testimony on the part of Peter that he learned his lesson from the Apostle Paul.

Now our chapter opens with "And certain men who came down from Judaea taught the brethren." Now these are the "certain" who came from James in Galatians chapter 2. And they said, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."

I do not know how these men looked, but I'm going to tell you what I think was their appearance. The men who came down from James, who said that they were followers of James, but as it turned out, they had gone beyond James. Those who had come from Jerusalem were gloomy, long-faced kill-joys who went around everywhere hanging gospel crepe. You can always spot a legalist. He's unhappy. He's sour. He's gloomy because even though he may set up his own legalistic requirements, much inferior to the requirements of the word of God always: "Thou shalt not smoke. Thou shalt not drink. Thou shalt not chew tobacco, etc." you know. Even though he sets up his standards, he knows down in his heart, he has failed them. And almost always, he's a defeated man.

Now this is not a laughing matter. It's a very serious thing. These men said "Except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved." Now Galatians is the exposition of this problem. Here is a rite that originally indicated the inefficacy of the flesh. That's the point of circumcision. It marked out an Israelite as a man who by this rite had acknowledged the inefficacy of the flesh, for the flesh was rolled back. And he had also acknowledged in the rite of circumcision that he belonged to the covenant that God had made with Israel, and that that rite of circumcision testified to the fact that he was righteous before God by faith, by faith. In other words, it marked out a man who had received the blessing of God, and he had received it on the basis of faith, and he was justified by faith in God who gave the Messiah and the Messianic program. He was justified by faith in him, and the rite was the testimony to it. Just as today baptism is the testimony to the fact that I have believed in Jesus Christ and have been justified by grace

and now undergo water baptism in testimony to the fact that I am not trusting anything at all except that which Jesus Christ has done for me.

Now these men came into the church and they said, Look, Abraham was circumcised. Jesus was circumcised. And Paul stood up. And I'm so thankful Paul did stand up. Paul stood up and said, Yes, Abraham was circumcised, but you forget, he was circumcised in Genesis chapter 15 and it was not until Genesis chapter 17 that circumcision came in as an ordinance of God. He was justified before he was circumcised, which indicates that our justification is not on the basis of yielded-ness to a rite but is based upon our faith in Jesus Christ.

And as for the Lord's circumcision, it was for an entirely different reason. He marked himself out as a member of the covenant, but he did not make any confession of sins ever in his life. You know why I'm so glad that there are men like Paul. There are men who are willing to study the word of God and when they see the truth of the word of God, they stand up for it.

Now what do you think happened in the church at Antioch when trouble came? Well, if this were a twentieth century church, somebody would get peeved, and they would go off and join another church and take their peevishness to that church. Some would get mad, and they would say all kinds of bad things about the apostles or about the men from Jerusalem, and they would run off and take their sourness into another local assembly. But in those days, fortunately, there was no other church to which they could go. And so they solved problems as they should be solved. They laid the cards on the table. And they said, Let's see what the word of God says, and when we see that, let's bow to it all of us.

I hope in Believers Chapel that as long as this assembly of Christians meet together that we realize that our authority is the word of God. And if at times our feelings are a little hurt, sometimes mine are, if at times we're a little peeved, we'll bring

everything into subjection to the word of God and have the grace to grow by our experiences together.

Now in the church at Antioch we read, "When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them." The Greek text said, "When they had had disputation, not a little, not a little." As a matter of fact, the Greek word translated here "dissension" is the Greek work "stasis" from which we get the English word static. There was a lot of static in the church at Antioch. As a matter of fact, there was an explosion.

There was no sentimental namby-pamby, milky spineless love. There was no sense of 'Now one must not judge these brethren who come down from Jerusalem. We must not judge, you know.' I think Paul jumped up immediately when someone said we must not judge, and said, Wait a minute, wait a minute. Have you ever understood what Jesus meant when he said that? He said cast not your pearls before swine. How can you help but judge who are swine and who are not?

The judgment that Jesus was talking about, was not the judgment of the plain teaching of the word of God. That we are called upon to do. It is the judgment of a man's motives which men cannot understand that we must always judge by the Scriptures. I'm beginning to think I'm a little like Paul. I think this is tremendously important. I wish I had time to spend the rest of the fifteen minutes on it, but I do not.

Well, after they had had dissension and disputation, not a little, they came together and they said, Men we are not decided. The early church believed in the principle of unanimity. I do too. I believe that the church is able to find the mind and will of God. And if the church is not able to find the mind and will of God, they should sit still.

If you cannot find the mind and will of God as a local church, then what hope do we have of pleasing the Lord? And so when they had difficulty, they sat down. And look, we don't seem to have the mind and will of God. Let's send Paul and Barnabas and a few others up to Jerusalem and discuss the question with the apostles and elders there.

And so they did. They went through the territory, and as they stopped in various churches, they stopped and told how God had blessed the ministry of the word among the Gentiles. And there was great rejoicing as the Christians came together and heard the stories of salvation and blessing.

But the question of how a person was brought into the family of God was the question at issue. And so when they arrived in Jerusalem, you discover immediately that there is no joy in Jerusalem because there were too many legalists in that organization there. There, there were sour, somber, sepulchral, sanctimoniousness, perhaps because there were a number of them that were sympathetic with that element which believed that "except a man be circumcised, he cannot be saved." But fortunately, the apostles saw the truth clearly.

When Paul and Barnabas stood up and told what they were seeing and hearing in Antioch and about that country, some of the Pharisees who had believed, and I believe they were genuine Christians, but they had not yet come to understand with clarity the principle of grace in all of its ramifications, they had believed, they stood up and they said, Well, that's fine, but it's necessary to circumcise them and to command them to keep the Law of Moses. You notice it does not say that these in Jerusalem said they were not saved. Those men who went down to Antioch, I think they were false teachers as Paul sets forth in Galatians.

Well now, the apostles and elders had not yet reached a mind, and so they decided to come together about this question. And apparently the church was present, but the apostles and elders decided the question. They did not vote, by the way, in the church in those days.

Well, there was a lot of disputing again, and finally Peter stood up. And he said, Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God made choice of me, that by my mouth the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles and that they should be saved by faith that they should believe. When I was in Cornelius' house, I was preaching the

message and I spoke there that by him therefore, whosoever believeth in him and to this give all the prophets witness, shall receive the remission of sins. And the Holy Spirit fell upon them before they were circumcised, before they were baptized.

Now that is the clearest possible evidence that God intends that Gentiles should be saved and saved apart from any rite because they were justified, given the Holy Spirit before they had a chance to be baptized. He put no difference between us Jews and them, purifying by faith their hearts.

Circumcision is a work. It is a work in this respect: It is a physical act. It is performed by human agency with a material instrumentality. And it is visible to others. It is the biblical definition of what is a work. Paul calls circumcision a work. There are those four characteristics about it. It is a physical act. It is performed by human agency with material instrumentality. And it is visible to others.

Now we do not have any problem with circumcision in the Christian church today. Our problem is baptism. That which was a rite in Israel and was intended to be a sign of righteousness came to be considered the basis for obtaining the reality. And so, in the Christian church in the twentieth century, there are great numbers of the Christian church who have fallen from grace into law, and they regard the act of baptism, which is designed to be a sign of the righteousness, which we have by faith, they regard that rite as a means to the attainment of the reality of righteousness. And so I must in faithfulness to the word of God warn you against not only Romanism's perversion of the way of salvation, but Protestantism's too.

We are told in Romanism that original sin is removed by the waters of baptism. Daily sin is removed by the nonbloody sacrifice of the mass. Lest you question that, the council of Trent has said, Let him be accursed who sayeth that sins are not removed by the nonbloody sacrifice of the mass. Venial sins are removed by the oil of extreme unction, and other sins are removed by purgatory.

There is only one purgatory in the Bible. It is the purgatory of Hebrews chapter 1 verse 3 where the writer of that epistle states that Jesus, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." What's left for the cross of Christ, where water, bread, oil and fire remove sins, what does the blood do? And if so much is done by works, little is done by grace.

Now Protestants are happy because we've put the Romanists in their place. But let me remind you that our Protestants have fallen into a similar error, and many of our Protestants in one form or another have set forth the gospel as repent, believe, be baptized and be saved, or various modifications of that. Repent, confess, believe, be baptized, then you're saved. That is again a falling into the ancient error.

Salvation is by grace. It is not by the works of the law, and it is not by legal works. And so I warn you. I must in love warn you. I must stand up as Paul stood up in Antioch and stand up for the purity of the gospel preaching that salvation is by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now Peter spoke to the men who were standing by, and he said to them, "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" Why refuse to allow that he was right in admitting the Gentiles on the basis of faith? And then, he sums it all up in verse 11. This is the "apostle's creed" as I understand it. "But we believe (we, we apostles, we believe) that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

What a magnificent statement the Apostle Peter has made. Even Paul could not make a better one. The same man whom Paul had rebuked a few days earlier in Antioch and had said, Peter, "For by grace are we saved through faith; and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." And now we find this man, an apostle, chief among the apostles, who has been humble enough to learn from the newcomer to the ranks, standing up in the midst and boldly saying, "But we believe

that through the grace of our LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they," the Gentiles.

Grace is the principle, free grace. Salvation is a free gift. Sometimes I think we have the idea that God has an examination which he requires us to pass before we get to heaven. And if we make a grade of seventy, we shall get into heaven. That's passing. If that were so, heaven would be thirty percent dirty. If we pass with a ninety-nine, heaven would be one percent dirty. God requires a perfect righteousness. As I expressed here a few Sunday's back, in the words of William Cunningham, "The righteousness of God which God requires of us is that righteousness which his righteousness requires him to require, a perfect righteousness."

It must be infinitely perfect before it satisfies God. Can we supply him that? If we are honest with ourselves, we say immediately, No, we could not possibly satisfy him with that. Can we bring to him the adherence to some rite such as baptism or the Lord's Supper and expect him to honor that for righteousness? He is not satisfied unless you present him with one hundred percent righteousness. Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul and thy neighbor as thyself." We are lost. We are condemned by God. But in his wonderful grace, he has brought us to the place of condemnation in order to show us his own free gift of salvation. So we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Dr. Ironside used to tell a story, which I've told some of you before, and I love to tell it at least once a year. A recent convert, he was a black man, he rose at a meeting and he gave his testimony to the saving grace of God. He told how the Lord had won his heart and given deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. And he spoke of Jesus Christ and of Jesus Christ's work and he said nothing of any efforts of his own. And he sat down. It was a great testimony.

The leader of the meeting, who was of a legalistic turn of mind, when his testimony was ended, he stood up and he said, 'Now our brother has told us the Lord's part in salvation. When I was converted I had a whole lot to do myself, before I could expect the Lord to do anything for me. Brother, didn't you do your part first before God did his part?' And he looked at the brother who had given the confession.

And the other was on his feet in a moment. He was a black Apostle Paul, and he stood up and he said, 'Yessir, I clear dun forgot. I didn't tell you about my part, did I? Well, I did my part for over thirty years, running away from God as fast as ever my sins could take me. That was my part. And God took after me, till he dun run me down. That was his part. I dun my part. He dun his part.' And then he sat down.

It was a good confession. When I told this story in Houston a few years ago, someone came up to me and said, Is that the meaning of that text "Whom the Lord loveth, he chaseth?" [Laughter]

There are only three possible plans of salvation. One of them is by man alone or by works. If that is true, then Jesus Christ died in vain. If you get to heaven on the basis of your good works, I ask you, my dear friend, why did Jesus Christ die? Why did Jesus Christ die? That was a great blunder.

The other way of salvation, or the second way, is by man and God. I do my part. God does his part. But I ask you, my dear friend, how can I know when I've done enough? And how can I know when God has done his part? Further, if I do anything, God is robbed of his glory, and he says he will not give his glory to men.

It's just as if I were to write in a testimony to the Wildroot Hair Tonic Company and say, I'd like to give a testimony to your hair tonic. Before I began to take your hair tonic, my hair looked like the hair on that greasy kid. It was long and straggly, and no girl ever took a look at me twice. And furthermore, it was falling out all over the place. But now since I've found Wildroot, to which I've added a little bit of my own concoction, my hair is lovely. It's down to my shoulders, but it's beautiful. It's not falling out

anymore. And now I'm engaged to a lovely girl. Well, that testimony would be utterly worthless. Do you know why? Because of that little statement, "to which I added a little bit of my own concoction." I could never know who's responsible for my beautiful hair.

And so you see, salvation is finally of God. That's the other possibility. And the Bible says salvation is of the Lord. As Peter says, "We believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." So free grace is the principle. Faith is the means. "By faith purifying their hearts."

What does faith mean? It's very simple. It means reliance. It means trust in Jesus Christ who died for us. In Keswick, you will see an acrostic for faith. Faith means "Forsaking all, I trust Him." F, A, I, T, H. Forsaking all, I trust Him. That's faith. And the result is salvation. The result is not only am I delivered, but I am invested with a righteousness which God's righteousness requires him to require.

Now we're all familiar with the so-called Apostle's Creed, at best a second century product. Here is a creed with a clearer right to the title than the well-known Apostle's Creed. But we, we apostles. Oh Peter, what do you believe? Well, do you believe in circumcision as a means of salvation? Do you say, But we believe that through circumcision we shall be saved, even as they? No, we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Peter, do you believe in baptismal regeneration? But we through baptism shall be saved? Oh no, but we through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, even as they. Peter, do you believe in other rites, the Lord's Supper, other rubrics, do you believe in all other of the things that go to make up our religion as a way of salvation? Do you believe, Peter, but we through religion shall be saved? No, but we through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.

Peter do you believe that doing your best is the way to salvation? Do you read that text, but we, if we do our best, shall be saved, even as they? No, but we through the grace of the Lord Jesus shall be saved. Peter, do you believe in turning over a new leaf,

culture, doing good works, joining the church, being a good citizen, reforming, any of the other things that go to make up human works? No, the bold apostle states, we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

But listen, this statement of Peter's is even more significant. He states, We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we, we Jews, shall be saved, even as they, the Gentiles. And you know, if you had been in that audience, I think you would have been shocked by that. It's just as if in the audience of Believers Chapel on Sunday morning we should see streaming in down the side some people that various ones among us might identify, Ah, there's an alcoholic. There is a prostitute. And so on down the line.

And if they should come in, and file in, and sit in the auditorium, and if we should have a meeting in which it would be possible for someone to stand on their feet and say something, and one of them should stand up and say, I want to praise God that I am a Christian. Well, I think that probably down in our hearts we might be saying something like this. Is it possible? Is it possible? And then I might stand up and say, Yes, it's possible for them to be saved, as well as for you. It's possible for a prostitute to be saved, as well as you. It's possible for an alcoholic perhaps to be saved, as well as you.

You're wonderful citizens in Dallas. My dear friends, if I stood up and said it is possible for you to be saved, if you have questions about them, as well as they, you would get some of the shock of this remark, for it is Peter who states, and he states it in these words, "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus, we Jews, we who raise the question, we may be saved as they, because the man who raises the question of morality, the man who raises the question of religion, the man who raises the question of good works, that man has not come to understand yet the significance of salvation by grace. It is he who more than the outcast who has known the grace of God and has no hope and who has come to Christ, it is that man, the moral man, who has question about them that needs the gospel.

And so my friend, if you in the audience think that a prostitute might perhaps be saved, it might be you who do not yet understand the grace of God. We believe through the grace of the Lord Jesus that we Jews, we apostles, may be saved, as well as they.

Peter, may then the morally good be saved? Yes, they may be saved, but they must come to the one fountain, that fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins.

So as I close this morning, I invite you, I do not know your situation, but I invite you to consider the word of God and the apostle's creed, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." Do not say in your heart I'll come when I'm better. You do not understand grace. Do not say I'll come when I've cleaned up my life a little bit. You do not understand grace. Come as you are. It is God who justifies the ungodly. And it is when we realize what we are and that there is no hope in human righteousness that we come and receive the righteousness which his righteousness requires him to require, and we have it by faith.

Do you have it? Have you put your trust in Jesus Christ? You may come to know him this morning in this auditorium not by coming down to the front. Why add another work? By in your heart saying thank you Lord for giving Jesus Christ, I come as I am without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me. And when you come, you are received. May God help you to do that in your heart. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that upon which apostles and simple Christians have relied down through the ages, the love of God the Father who gave the Son and the communion of the Holy Spirit who has brought home the gospel to our hearts abide with all who know him, Jesus Christ, in sincerity. And Oh God, if the Holy Spirit has opened the hearts and minds of some today who have not yet understood grace, may they flee to the cross and receive life everlasting. May the blessing of the Spirit go with us as we part. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

